

MEMO

TO: Duane L. Shroufe, Director

FROM: Bob Broscheid, Assistant Director *bh*
Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Leonard L. Ordway, Game Branch Chief

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 3, 4, and 26 for 2008 Hunting Season.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 3 (pronghorn antelope), 4 (elk), and 26 (population management) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers or authorized limits, and open areas for the respective 2008 fall hunting season. A detailed description of all proposals is available for public review at all Department offices.

DATE: November 7, 2007

Summary:

At the August 2007 meeting, the Commission approved a two-year hunt guideline package under which hunt structures and recommendations would be formulated. The Department sought public input on these guidelines between June and August 2007, and received input from about 172 meeting attendees and 98 written responses, which were shared with the Commission at the August 2007 meeting. Per Commission direction, these guidelines will be used through 2010 spring seasons.

Following are the Department's recommendations for:

Commission Order 3 – Pronghorn Antelope (Refer to attached copies of the proposed hunt season structure and permit numbers for unit by unit details.)

The general season permits are recommended to increase by 32 from last year for a total recommendation of 503 permits. The archery recommendation is 390 permits, which is a decrease of 5 permits from last year. The muzzleloader seasons are recommended for 113 permits, an increase of 10 permits from last year.

Attached is a revised Pronghorn Management Plan. This plan has been revised and reflects the specific management issues and planned activities for implementation within each unit. This plan tiers from Department operational plans previously shared with the Commission.

The Department received no substantial feedback from the public regarding the pronghorn hunt structures since the last hunt guideline and recommendation process.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 3 – PRONGHORN ANTELOPE AS PROPOSED.**

Commission Order 4 – Elk (Refer to attached copies of the proposed hunt season structure and permit numbers for unit by unit detail.)

Elk harvest is recommended to allow limited population growth in some areas in conjunction with the Elk Management Plans, otherwise populations will be held stable or allowed to increase slightly in relationship with current environmental conditions. Limited population management zones are still targeted for reduction. This recommendation package will continue to adjust bull to cow ratios to meet or move toward recently approved management guidelines. General season permits are recommended at 15,910 permits, an increase of 600 permits from last year (the change comprises an increase of 670 bull elk permits and a reduction of 70 antlerless elk permits from last year). Juniors antlerless elk permit opportunities are increased by 150 to 1,335 permits (5.6% of opportunity), and archery elk permits are recommended to increase by 710 to 5,574 (the change comprises an increase of 870 bull elk permits and a reduction of 160 antlerless elk permits from last year). Muzzleloader permit opportunities are recommended to increase by 210 permits to 1,373 (the change comprises an increase of 260 bull elk permits and a decrease of 50 antlerless elk permits from last year). And finally it is recommended that CHAMP hunters retain the 10 antlerless elk permits allocated to this season type.

The elk permit recommendations were developed in accordance with Commission direction. First, the Commission directed the Department to find opportunities to allow for elk population growth where consistent with habitat conditions. The Department is recommending reductions in antlerless harvest to accommodate herd growth where possible. The Department is recommending continued allocation of permits by weapon type using the Commission approved weapons allocation formula. Bull and antlerless elk harvests are allocated by gender and weapon type using five-year averages of first-choice application demand and five-year averages of hunt success by weapon type; limited opportunity hunts are excluded from this allocation determination as are the addition of 455 new archery hunts (400 additional archery bull permits in November and 55 in September) to explore new hunt structures. And finally, the Commission directed the Department to allocate at least 5% of the total available elk permits as antlerless elk permits to juniors-only seasons to address hunter recruitment goals. The permit allocation in this package for juniors-only antlerless elk permits represents 5.6% of the total recommended elk permits.

Not including limited opportunity or juniors-only hunts, the targeted and recommended allocations for bull and antlerless elk permits are as follows:

Bull Elk:	<u>Target</u>	<u>Recommended</u>
	68% general	66% general
	28% archery	28% archery
	4% muzzleloader	6% muzzleloader

Antlerless Elk:	<u>Target</u>	<u>Recommended</u>
	77% general	77% general
	17% archery	17% archery
	6% muzzleloader	6% muzzleloader

The recommended allocation for antlerless elk permits achieves the target. However, the recommended allocation for bull elk permits represents a slight deviation from target but is necessary due to increased distribution of muzzleloader opportunity. Projected harvest for both bull and antlerless seasons are expected to be within one percent of targeted allocation. The Department will continue to use the harvest allocation formula to closely approximate hunter demand.

Limited opportunity seasons are recommended for an increase of 275 permits for the general season and a decrease of 45 permits for the archery season, yielding 1,732 and 160 permits, respectively. No muzzleloader limited opportunity elk hunts are recommended.

The Department is also recommending that elk tags be offered for any elk that may be purchased over the counter for the following hunt areas: portions of northern Units 4A and 4B, the Verde Valley Hunt Area in Units 6A, 19A, and 21; Units 12A and 12B; and the Alamo Lake Hunt Area in Units 16A and 44A. Portions of northern Units 4A and 4B and the Verde Valley Hunt Area are recommended for an archery season, whereas Units 12A and 12B and the Alamo Lake Hunt Area are recommended for general seasons. Recommended season dates are January 1 to March 31; August 1 to September 11; and December 1-31, 2008.

The hunt recommendation package was coordinated with land management agencies, local habitat partnership committees, and the Forage Resource Study Group in Region 2. The general, muzzleloader, archery, and juniors-only permit allocations were adjusted to address the allocation targets as noted above. Permits for bull and antlerless harvest were managed to meet management guidelines for bull to cow ratios and forage use as noted in the hunt guidelines and the Elk Management Plan.

Attached is the revised Elk Management Plan as reference. This plan reflects direction provided by the Commission at their August 2007 meeting, and the hunt recommendation package is in alignment with it. This plan tiers from Department operational plans previously shared with the Commission.

The Department received no substantial feedback from the public regarding the pronghorn hunt structures since the last hunt guideline and recommendation process.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 4 – ELK AS PROPOSED.**

Commission Order 26 – Population Management Seasons

Population management seasons are recommended for implementation in generally the same units, seasons, and permit levels as last year. "Designated elk" is the legal wildlife in each of the population management seasons, so that the Director may designate the desired legal animal for harvest when the permits are issued. Although the Department is recommending that the Commission authorize 1,815 elk (1,590 general, 25 HAM, and 280 archery-only), 675 javelina (310 general, 250 HAM, and 115 archery-only), 156 buffalo (all general), and 122 bear (68 general, 26 HAM, and 28 archery-only), these tags will not be issued unless approved by the Director following a determination from the population management hunt review and approval process.

No substantive public comments were received regarding Population Management Seasons since the last public process for hunt guidelines and recommendations.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO APPROVE COMMISSION ORDER 26 – POPULATION MANAGEMENT SEASONS AS PROPOSED.**

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Attachments